



Resource Family Connection

News, Events, and Information Benefiting
the Children of Waukesha County
March and April, 2022



Tips for Building Resilience in Our Children By: Creating a Family

Our foster and adopted kids have often experienced overwhelming amounts of chaos and change before settling into the safe space of our homes. The trauma of those experiences can impact the ability to learn resilience in their lives moving forward. Building resilience in our children who came with challenging and traumatic histories behind them is an essential task of foster and adoptive parenting.

Foster and adopted children who have experienced trauma quite often need our help to learn resilience in the face of current and future life experiences. Heather Forkey, MD of the Foster Children Evaluation Service (FaCES) and the Child Protection Program at the University of Massachusetts Memorial Children's Medical Center in Worcester, has done some extensive research on the impacts of trauma and resiliency skills in children.

We've all heard of the B.R.A.T. diet for addressing a child with stomach distress - bananas, rice, applesauce, and toast. It's an age-old cure to sooth the upset and help their tummies recover. It's just as crucial to have tools that will help us heal our children's hearts and brains from the complex challenges through which they have lived and which they will face as they grow. Dr. Forkey created and easy-to-remember, accessible device to help address our children's emotional distress. Now, during this season of uncertainty and pandemic crisis, it is a great time to consider practicing the Three Rs.

The Three Rs of Building Resilience

When a child experiences a traumatic event, he will need your intervention to find his footing again. For many of our foster and adopted kids, everyday occurrences that happen in our homes can trigger previous anxieties or traumas of which you were not aware. You don't have to delve into the earlier experience if you see trauma behaviors emerging. Instead, you can take the distressing event and use it to help him find healing.

The 3 Rs will help you build resilience in him, for this event and future challenges:

Reassure

In the moment of distress - or as quickly as you can get to him - comfort your child with both words and your physical presence. Take this time to be soft and gentle to raise the level of nurture that you are expressing. Reassure him that he is safe, that you are with him, that you are available, and that he is loved. Take your time with this step, as it's foundational and pivotal to his ability to move forward.

Return to Routine

So often, when a distressing event occurs, we are tempted to suspend our typical structure. However, many children who have a trauma history feel soothed by a predictable schedule. Returning to a familiar routine once your child is reassured and on his way to being calmed will reinforce the sense of felt-safety you are seeking to bolster. A structured environment also reduces anxiety for a child who is stressed.

Regulate

Many children cannot regulate themselves when they've just endured a traumatic experience. Dr. Forkey says,

Ultimately, regulating is about being able to identify your emotions and then modulate them, and that can start with giving kids the words for what is going on.

When your child is in distress, you can start the path to regulation by practicing deep calming breathing together. Co-regulating is a unique tool that allows the child's triggered senses just to follow you. Regulating together takes some weight from her shoulders to "pull herself together." She is instead free to rely upon you to lead the way. Many of our children need to learn these coping skills, both at the moment and when returning to regulation following the distress.

Other tips you can try to reach regulation - once the traumatic moment is over - include:

- ✧ Name the feelings of overwhelm - Use a tool like feeling flashcards to get comfortable identifying her feelings.
- ✧ Role-play various emotions - Practice expressing the feelings and how to manage them, using these 3 Rs.
- ✧ Take turns playing "What If" - Create silly versions of scenarios in which she has previously struggled.
- ✧ Journal together - Write a story or a question to her and pass the journal to her for a response.
- ✧ Maximize teachable moments - When you catch a movie scene reminiscent of an issue your child has faced, talk about how the character handled it. Ask your child what he would do. Brainstorm together about the pros and cons of the different ways to cope and so on.

Put The 3 Rs On Repeat

Building resilience in our kids is a multi-layered process that, in part, requires consistency from us. Our ability to be consistent comes from managing our own ability to regulate. Then we can be ready to meet our child's needs. Being mindful of the things that happen during the day that can dysregulate us is critical.

One helpful way to work on our regulations is to narrate the experience for our kids. They are always watching anyway, so go ahead and maximize it:

- ✧ When an appointment is a no-show with no explanation, say, "I feel very disrespected when someone doesn't show up for an appointment. I feel angry when my time is not valued."
- ✧ Follow up on the naming of your feelings with a plan for how you are going to handle yourself. "Well, I guess this means I have an hour to sit and read that book I've been trying to get to all week. What would you like to do with your extra hour today?"

Tips for Building Resilience in Our Children

(Continued from Page 1)

As your foster or adopted child grows more confident in his ability to “bounce back” from distressing moments, you may be tempted to set the 3 Rs on a back burner. Instead, press in a bit when you see your child successfully managing those traumatic events. Apply the 3 Rs from the “Hey! I caught you doing GREAT!” kind of perspective. Positive reinforcement and the surprise of being called out for success are a fabulous impetus to keep building his resilience.

Building Resilience Together

Many kids have a natural tendency toward resilience, while others do not yet possess that skill. Once your foster or adopted child feels safe, nurtured, and regulated, you can enjoy witnessing their expressions of resilience. Building resiliency in a child who has experienced trauma is one of the essential tasks of parenthood. Growing this life skill together can be a bonding experience that will buffer your relationship for the future.

Navigating Social Media with Foster and Adopted Teens

By: Christie Renick

Whether we like it or not, social media is here to stay.

Social media has gone from the cool new fad to an ever-present reality in the lives of most Americans. This is especially true for teens. Roughly 94 percent of them are online every day, where they are spending an average of nine hours on an ever-increasing array of social media sites - from Snapchat to Instagram to YouTube to Facebook.

Further complicating your life if you are a parent who wants to keep tabs on your children's online activity are mobile phones. Sixty-nine percent of social media access happens via our smartphones. Where you might once have been able to keep an eye on activity happening on a family computer in your living room, teens can now access the internet at any place, at any time, and while actively avoiding your prying eyes.

If those teens are in foster care, or recently adopted from foster care, there may be even more risks to be aware of when it comes to their online activities.

How Teens Use Social Media

For the most part, teen development hasn't changed. This phase of life is one of self-exploration. Teens want to find out who they are, and they do so through experimenting with their clothes, social circles, and personas.

It is also a time for making mistakes. Adolescents' brains are still developing, and they are often not able to predict consequences for their actions. In the era before social media, those consequences could be severe, but they were typically contained within a person's community. That's not necessarily true anymore.

Some of that bad judgement can be dangerous when teens exercise it online:

- ✧ 55 percent have provided information to someone they didn't know
- ✧ 29 percent have been contacted by a stranger
- ✧ 43 percent change behavior if a parent is watching
- ✧ 67 percent know how to hide their online activity from parents

Social Media and Our Foster and Adoptive Teens - The Bad

When it comes to foster and adoptive teens, you may have even more to worry about than the standard (and already stressful) array of teen activity that can get them into trouble. In particular, there are two primary concerns I see:

- ✧ Unauthorized contact with birth family. For many teens from foster care, contact with birth parents and other members of their birth family is approved and healthy. However, there are times where this is not the case, and contact with a birth

parent or other birth family member may prevent them from healing from past trauma.

- ✧ Unhealthy (or downright dangerous) connections from their time in care. Children who spend time living on the streets or in the company of people who took advantage of them can be contacted by people who preyed on their vulnerabilities in the past and may plan to in the future.

It's Not All Bad News

While it's easy to focus on the risks social media use can bring, there are a number of benefits, especially for foster and adopted children:

- ✧ Maintaining sibling connections. Safe and healthy relationships with siblings (and other similar family connections) should be preserved if at all possible. Those relationships might be disrupted when children enter foster care, and continuing contact through social media can offer needed support and stability to a child in foster care.
- ✧ Sustaining relationships with other people who have provided encouragement and support when their lives were in turmoil - such as previous caseworkers, CASA volunteers, and foster parents - can provide a sense of security.
- ✧ Monitoring their activity. Keeping an eye on children's social media profiles can give you a lot of insight about their lives, especially who they hang out with and what they like to do - at least what they're willing to post online, which is usually a lot.
- ✧ Establishing a connection when things go awry. I recall a story of a young man in foster care who was prone to running away from his foster homes. He also had a habit of frequently posting on Facebook. So when he would run away, his caseworker would simply keep an eye on his Facebook page, and sure enough, he'd post something about where he was and who he was with within a few hours.

What Can You Do?

With all the risks out there, it might be tempting to consider banning your teens from social media completely. That's not only impractical but in the end it could do more harm than good.

Instead, approach social media and other online activity like you do other sensitive topics: communication. Talks with your teen should include:

- ✧ Teaching them how to manage their privacy settings.
- ✧ Cautioning them about what information they include in social media posts, including what's in their photos.
- ✧ Insisting that they don't connect with anyone online unless they know them “in real life” already.

There are other things you can do to try and ensure your teen's safety online. A few tips:

- ✧ If you pay for your phone and their monthly plan, consider making them sign a contract that stipulates that you are allowed access to their device (better for younger teens).
- ✧ Conduct regular searches online for your child's name - you may find information about your child published online that you were previously unaware of.
- ✧ Keep your child's phone someplace where they can't access it at night, such as in your bedroom.
- ✧ Consider installing a parent-control app on your child's phone; Digital Trends and Tom's Guide publish lists of apps and how they can help you monitor your child's activity.
- ✧ Educate yourself about apps used by some teens that hide or disguise what they have on their phones; TeenSafe maintains an annual “Smartphone App Blacklist” that parents can use to learn more.

It's said that parenting in the days of mobile phones and the internet is a lot harder than parenting when we were young. That may very well be true. But the changes are here to stay, and we owe it to our children to do everything we can to prepare them for the world they live in now, and to keep them safe while they learn.

Milwaukee St. Patrick's Day Parade

The Shamrock Club of Wisconsin and Westtown Association look forward to gathering with our friends, families, and neighbors for the 54th Shamrock Club of Wisconsin St. Patrick's Day Parade!

When: Saturday, March 12, 2022

Time: Noon

For Additional Information: <https://saintpatricksparade.org/>

Easter Fun

Delafield Community Egg Hunt

There will be 3000+ eggs to hunt for with some grant prize eggs that have prizes to be picked up at the local Chamber businesses! Get your picture taken with the Easter Bunny! Enjoy inflatable games! Fun for all sizes!

Where: St. John's Northwestern Academies, 1101 Genesee St, Delafield

When: Saturday, April 9, 2022

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.; Egg hunt starts at 11:00 a.m.

Cost: Admission is free, participation in select activities for a cash fee

For Additional Information: <https://delafieldchamber.com/easter-egg-hunt>

Easter Eggstravaganza

Walk through the park to collect goodies from local businesses. At the end, have your picture taken with the Easter Bunny.

Where: Lisbon Community Park, N78W26970 Bartlett Parkway, Hartland

When: Saturday, April 9, 2022

Time: 12:30 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Cost: Free

For Additional Information: <https://www.townoflisbonwi.com/Calendar.aspx?EID=434>

Town of Brookfield Easter Egg Hunt

All children 8 years old and under are invited to participate in the Easter Egg Hunt. Children will be grouped by ages. We will again have an Easter Egg "Crawl" for the tiny egg-hunters. Bring your own basket and your camera for pictures after the hunt with the Easter Bunny! Don't be late, as this event goes quickly!

Where: Marx Park, 700 S. Barker Rd., Brookfield

When: Saturday, April 16, 2022

Time: 10:00 a.m.

Cost: Free

For Additional Information: http://www.townofbrookfield.com/parkrec/special_events/specialevents.html#easter

Community Events

Lake Country Community Fest

The Fest will feature exhibitor booths, a food court, live demonstrations, children's activities, entertainment, healthcare clinics, and more!

Where: Arrowhead High School, 700 North Ave., Hartland

When: Saturday, March 19, 2022

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Cost: Free

For Additional Information: <https://hartland-wi.org/events/lake-country-community-fest/>

Waukesha Art Crawl

Hundreds of artisans at 20 galleries and showplaces are featured at this seasonal event, walk the downtown streets to discover your next artistic treasure, shop the boutiques, listen to live music, or indulge in food and drink.

Where: Downtown Waukesha

When: Saturday, March 5, 2022

Time: 4:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Cost: Free admission

For Additional Information: <https://visitwaukesha.org/event/get-lucky-waukesha-art-crawl-2022/>

Fun At Retzer Nature Center

Outdoor Classroom Series

March 2: Hiking Through the Water Cycle

March 16: Signs of Spring

April 20: Spring Wildflowers

April 27: Animal Adaptations - Turtles

Where: Retzer Nature Center, S14W28167 Madison St, Waukesha

Time: 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.

Cost: \$4.00 per student

For Additional Information and to Register: <https://www.waukeshacounty.gov/envedu/general-public/enveduhub/>

Wednesdays at the Pinaetarium

Complement and expand your learning with a show on the dome! Geared towards elementary students.

March 2: The Little Star That Could

March 9: Cosmix

March 16: Defying Gravity

March 23: Spring Break Show - One World, One Sky: Big Bird's Adventure

March 30: It's About Time - The Cosmic Cycles We Live By

April 6: Space Quiz

April 13: The Little Star That Could

April 20: Did an Asteroid Really Kill the Dinosaurs?

April 27: Amazing Planet

Where: Horwitz-DeRemer Planetarium, located inside the Retzer Environmental Learning Center, S14W28167 Madison St, Waukesha

Time: 11:00 a.m.

Cost: \$4.00 per seat (3 and under are free)

For Additional Information and to Register: <https://www.waukeshacounty.gov/envedu/general-public/enveduhub/>

Story Hike

Enjoy a spring story hike, featuring the children's book, "Begin with a Bee" by Liza Ketchum. Set out on the Orange Trail to read the book while enjoying the outdoors at the same time! Completely self-guided. The Orange Trail is a mowed grass trail with some sloped terrain (approximately .75 mile).

Where: Retzer Nature Center, S14W28167 Madison St, Waukesha

Time Open: Daily, Sunrise - 10:00 p.m.

Cost: No daily entrance fee

For Additional Information: <https://www.waukeshacounty.gov/landandparks/park-system/find-a-park/retzer-nature-center/specialevents/StoryHike/>

Outdoor Fun

Dog Exercise Areas

Grab your four-legged canine friend and head to one of Waukesha County Park System's four fully fenced, off leash dog exercise areas, two designated dog swim areas, three open beach swimming areas, and over 60 miles of wooded and paved trails to explore!

For Additional Information: <https://www.waukeshacounty.gov/landandparks/park-system/Dog-Exercise-Areas/>

Geocaching

There are 2,803 geocaches around Waukesha! To get started, create a free geocaching account and download the official Geocaching app or use a GPS device. Anyone can geocache!

For Additional Information: <https://www.geocaching.com/play>



Additional Training and Events



Due to COVID-19 and social distancing, we currently are not having any in-person trainings or informational sessions. A survey will be distributed at a later time regarding in-person trainings.

Caregiver Connection

Caregiver Connection is a group for kinship and foster parents. This group will provide education, support, and networking for these caregivers residing in Waukesha County.

This is a virtual group on Microsoft Teams.

March Topic: Self-Care When Parenting Harder to Parent Kids

Description: We will discuss why self-care is so important. We will also discuss compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma.

Date: March 24, 2022

Time: 6:00 p.m.

To Register: Email Rhonda Klinger at rklinger@waukeshacounty.gov by March 23

April Topic: Managing Expectations

Description: Managing and understanding your expectations is a vital part of creating a healthy relationship with your child.

Date: April 20, 2022

Time: 6:00 p.m.

To Register: Email Rhonda Klinger at rklinger@waukeshacounty.gov by April 19

Waukesha County Foster Parent Information Sessions

Open to Waukesha County residents interested in learning more about foster care in our community. Also required for any new foster parents. The information sessions will be held virtually using Microsoft Teams.

Date: March 9, April 13, 2022

Time: 6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Date: March 24, April 28, 2022

Time: 12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.

To Register: Email Rhonda Klinger (rklinger@waukeshacounty.gov). Please include your full name, email, and the information session that you plan to attend.

New Look for Newsletter

In January of this year, we emailed the relative caregivers and foster parents a survey regarding the Resource Family Connection Newsletter. Based on the results of the survey, we will be making changes to the newsletter. Starting in May, the Resource Family Connection will be one page (front and back). It will focus on Community Events, Community Activities, and Caregiver Trainings. Thank you for your participation!

Healing Hearts of Waukesha County

Free, local peer groups welcome children, youth, and families who grieve loss due to death, divorce, addiction, incarceration, deportation, or military deployment. In person and virtual groups available.

For Additional Information: <https://www.healingheartsofwaukeshaco.org/>

Parents United Trainings

To Register: <http://parentsunitedwi.org/register-now/>

March Topic: Collaborative and Proactive Solutions

Description: The CPS model provides a compassionate understanding of kids' behavioral challenges and a non-adversarial, effective approach for reducing challenging behavior, improving communication, and repairing relationships.

Date: Wednesday, March 9, 2022

Time: 12:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.

April Topic: Supporting Students with ADHD

Description: Dr. Patric Mattek, a clinical psychologist, will discuss the nature and neurobiology of the Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and our brain's executive functions.

Date: Tuesday, April 5, 2022

Time: 9:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.



Save The Date! Families Like Mine Conference

This conference is for **Relative Caregivers**, with a focus on the topics that are important to them while providing them with the opportunity to meet other relative caregivers!

Where: Kalahari Resort, 1305 Kalahari Dr, Wisconsin Dells

When: Saturday, May 21, 2022

For Additional Information: Call 414-475-1246



Contact Numbers:

Foster Care Social Workers:

Waukesha County Health & Human Services
262-548-7212

Michelle Lim, Foster Care Supervisor
262-970-4761

Cassie BeLow 262-896-8574

Rhonda Klinger 262-548-7240

Jennifer Mantei 262-548-7250

Libby Sinclair 262-548-7277

Hilary Smith 262-548-7254

Case Management Social Workers:

Angie Sadler, Ongoing Social Work Supervisor
262-548-7272

Eric Calvino, Ongoing Social Work Supervisor
262-548-7271

Jennifer Eiler, Ongoing Social Work Supervisor
262-548-7260

Nicole Allende 262-548-7265

Jamie Carter 262-548-7264

Kimberly Dudzik 262-548-7347

Stephanie Engle 262-548-7424

Megan Fishler 262-896-8570

Abbey Girman 262-548-7695

Sharon Godwin 262-548-7684

Abby Hudson-Ramirez 262-548-7298

Laura Jahnke 262-548-7359

Jessica Larsen 262-548-7346

Maria Maurer 262-548-7345

Jessica Palmersheim 262-896-8281

Johanna Ploeger 262-896-6857

Elizabeth Russo 262-548-7349

Kim Sampson 262-548-7273

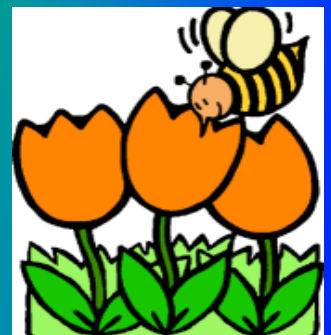
Linda Senger 262-548-7698

Brittany Sutton 262-548-7262

Children's Mental Health Outreach
262-548-7666

Medical Emergency: 911

Family Emergency: 211 or 262-547-3388



If an Allegation of Abuse or Neglect has been made against you, please call:

FASPP
Norma Schoenberg
920-922-9627